

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7574

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 0888

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ZM, AR, US, BR

SUBJECT: POSTPONEMENT OF BA MFM

REF: BUENOS AIRES 0708, BRASILIA 0786

1. ON JAN 20 I HAD A CONVERSATION, ON THE BASIS OF THE DEPT'S INSTRUCTIONS, WITH FOREIGN MINISTER SILVEIRA CONCERNING THE FORMULA FOR HANDLING THE CUBAN QUESTION THAT FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES HAD ADVANCED IN THE MEETING WITH AMBASSADORS HILL AND MAILLARD (BA 0359). IN THE COURSE OF OUR TALK, SILVEIRA, IN RESPONSE TO A PROBE BY ME BASED ON VIGNES' DESCRIPTION OF THE BRAZILIAN NEGATIVE POSITION ON ATTENDANCE AT BA WITH CUBA PRESENT, STATED EMPHATICALLY THAT HE HAD NEVER TOLD VIGNES THAT BRAZIL WOULD NOT ATTEND IF CUBA DID. SILVEIRA ADDED THAT OBVIOUSLY VIGNES WAS SUGGESTING THAT TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO COVER HIS OWN RETREAT AND DISCOMFITURE.

2. MY OWN VIEW IS THAT SILVEIRA NEVER TOOK (OR WAS AUTHORIZED TO TAKE) A CLEAR-CUT POSITION WITH ARGENTINA ON THE QUESTION OF BRAZILIAN PARTICIPATION IN A CUBA-ATTENDED MFM. THIS DELIBERATE AMBIGUITY WAS BASED ON THE EXPECTATION THAT THE ISSUE WOULD BECOME MOOT (AS INDEED IT FINALLY DID WITH VIGNES' CHANGE OF HEART OF WHICH SILVEIRA WAS INFORMED ON JAN 20) AND ON A CONSEQUENT DESIRE TO
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AVOID A DIFFICULT DEFINITION OF POSITION, LEAVING THE

BURDEN TO OTHERS. THIS EVASIVENESS OR LACK OF PRECISION MAY HAVE LED VIGNES TO INFER THAT THE GOB WOULD NOT ATTEND. I DOUBT VERY MUCH, HOWEVER, THAT SILVEIRA WAS EXPLICITLY OR DEFINITELY NEGATIVE.

3. SILVEIRA'S STATEMENT TO ME ON JAN 27 (BRASILIA 0786) SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT SILVEIRA INTENDED TO SAY THAT HE HAD TOLD VIGNES REPEATEDLY THAT BRAZIL WOULD ATTEND THE BA MFM BEGIN UNDERLINE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, THAT IS, WITH CUBA PRESENT END UNDERLINE. RATHER, SILVEIRA'S COMMENT OF JAN 27 SHOULD BE CONSTRUED TO REFER TO BRAZIL'S READINESS TO ATTEND THE MFM DESPITE THE TRADE ACT ISSUE.

4. IN SUM, I READ SILVEIRA'S TACTICS THIS WAY: (A) HE DID NOT WANT, WAS NOT AUTHORIZED, AND SAW NO NEED TO TAKE A DEFINITIVE POSITION ON THE QUESTION OF BRAZILIAN PARTICIPATION IN A CUBA-ATTENDED MFM; (B) THEREFORE, HE WAS VAGUE IN DEALING WITH VIGNES BUT HE ALWAYS STAYED SHORT OF COMMITTING HIMSELF, PREFERRING THAT OTHER COUNTRIES TAKE THE LEAD AND EXPECTING THAT IN THE END VIGNES WOULD BACKGRACK; AND (C) HE WAS CLEAR AND DEFINITIVE (AND SINCERE) IN SAYING TO VIGNES THAT BRAZIL SAW NO REASON FOR THE TRADE ACT ISSUE TO INHIBIT THE HOLDING OF THE MFM OR BRAZILIAN ATTENDANCE AT IT.
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